

# The Softer Side of Hard Times: Kentucky Depression-era Quilts



**April 17, 2004–August 28, 2004**

**Keeneland Changing Exhibits Gallery  
10:00–5:00, Tues.–Sat.**

**Kentucky History Center**

***Presented by the  
Kentucky Historical Society***

The Great Depression started earlier and lasted longer in Kentucky than it did in more urban states. In the midst of uncertainty, traditional crafts like quilting enjoyed new popularity. Pastel solids and prints were worked into countless pieced, appliquéd, and embroidered designs. The quilts on display—with their cheery flower gardens, sunbonnets, and whimsical animal motifs—make it is easy to forget that they were made during bleak and uncertain times.



***The Elephant's Child quilt,***  
*1934. Made from a pattern*  
*acquired through Woman's Home*  
*Companion magazine by Hazel*  
*J. Hieronymous of Lee County,*  
*Kentucky.*  
 Donated by Rose Hieronymous

Many Depression-era quilts were made by resourceful housewives whose motto, “waste not, want not,” hardened their resolve to find creative solutions to the most immediate problems of keeping their families warm and fed. While demonstrating that there could be a softer side to hard times, these pragmatic and strong-willed women unknowingly secured Kentucky’s role in the national quilt revival of the 1930s.

***Pansies & Ribbons appliqué***  
***quilt, c. 1930. Made by Mattie***  
*Clark Black (1885–1963) of*  
*Lexington.*

Loaned by the University of Kentucky  
 William T. Young Library, Wade Hall  
 Collection



Photo on front: ***Woman with Quilt and Children,*** c. 1930.  
 Courtesy of University of Louisville Photographic Archives, Jean  
 Thomas Collection

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